

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.

25/00209/FUL

CASE OFFICER

Anna Hayes

DETERMINATION DATE 28.05.2025 **EXT OF TIME** 27.06.2025

Address: Lancashire Farm Dairies 138 Whitelees Road Littleborough OL15 8DU

Proposal: Installation of 4 new silo tanks to existing service yard together with associated engineering works, fencing and landscaping

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	Y

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N/A
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N/A
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	N
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	y

RECOMMENDATION

Grant subject to conditions

CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: RG

DATE: 23 June 2025

SITE

The application site relates to 138 Whitelees Road in Littleborough, previously the former McCormick Europe Ltd site, recently acquired by Lancashire Farm Dairies. The site occupies a large area of land with dual points of vehicular access from Stockton Street to the south-west of the site providing access to the dedicated service yard, and to the north-east off Whitelees Road.

This application relates specifically to the southwestern area of the existing car park to the front of the main building which is bordered by mature trees and vegetation. Beyond which the ground levels drop significantly to the car park area serving the Lidl Supermarket. The change in ground levels from the site are appreciable, particularly to the east with exposed views over the valley to a backdrop of the Pennine Hills.

To the south, the area is primarily industrial and commercial, while to the north the area is predominately residential.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought in relation to the construction of four new silo milk tanks along with associated slab and foundation works, as well as a protective bund, within the existing car park of the former McCormick Europe Ltd site. The development also involves an extension of the existing service yard onto an informal grassed area. Due to the car park's sloping terrain from north to south, a small perimeter retaining wall will be needed for the service yard extension. The area designated for the silo base is 182m², and the service yard extension will cover about 130m².

The silo tanks are required to facilitate the production line of Lancashire Farm Dairies products within the main operational building to the north of the site. It is understood that without the silo tanks, the operations of the business will not be able to function since the manufacturing plant depends on the milk supply from the silos.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

Section 2 Achieving sustainable development

Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy

Section 9 Promoting sustainable transport

Section 11 Making efficient use of land

Section 12 Achieving well-designed places

Development Plan

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making.

The development plan for the proposal consists of the Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan, Rochdale Core Strategy (CS), adopted 2016, and saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies. The Council also has an adopted series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) (2024)

Sustainable and Resilient Places

JP-S1 Sustainable Development

JP-S2 Carbon and Energy

JP-S3 Heat and Energy Networks
JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment
JP-S5 Clean Air
JP-S6 Resource Efficiency

Places for Jobs

JP-J1 Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth
JP-J2 Employment Sites and Premises
JP-J4 Industry and Warehousing Development

Greener Places

JP-G1 Landscape Character
JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Places for People

JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Connected Places

JP-C6 Walking and Cycling
JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO1 To deliver a more prosperous economy

E2 Increasing jobs and prosperity (partially replaced by PfE policies JP-J3 and JP-J4)
E3 Focussing on economic growth corridors and areas

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

P1 Improving image
P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
P3 Improving design of new development

SO4 Promoting a Greener Environment

G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
G8 Managing water resources and flood risk
G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 Improving accessibility

Managing delivery and monitoring progress

DM1 General Development requirements
SD1 Delivering sustainable development

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/1 Defined urban area
EC/2 Primary Employment Zone

Other

The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are also relevant:

- Guidelines & Standards for Residential Development SPD, June 2016.

Also of relevance are:

- National Design Guide (2019) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government);
- National Planning Practice Guidance.

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

The site has extensive planning history. The most recent/relevant planning history is detailed below:

17/00965/FUL - Construction of additional car parking area for 40 cars including associated earthworks within existing site boundary – Approved 12.07.2018

18/01205/FUL - Single storey extension to front of building to extend existing canteen – Approved 19.12.2018

18/01363/DOC - Submission of details to comply with conditions 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9 of planning permission 17/00965/FUL – Request completed 29.01.2019

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways And Engineering

Confirms no objection to the proposal.

Env Health - Noise/Odours

Confirms no objection to the proposal.

Env Health - Air Quality

No comments received to date

Tree Officer

No comments received to date

Environment Agency

No comments received to date

Lead Local Flood Authority/Drainage

No comments received to date

Environmental Control (Landfill Gas)

Confirms no objection to the proposal.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

Confirms no objection to the proposal subject to conditions, including the provision of a bird/bat box for wildlife and control of tree planting via a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

Health And Safety Executive

Confirms no comments on the application, falling outside the scope of HSEs control.

REPRESENTATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the application has been advertised by neighbour notification letters and site notice.

The Council has received 1 letter of support, focusing on the contribution to the local community through job opportunities during construction and operation, boosting the local economy, the related support of agricultural businesses and the applicant's support and contribution to sustainable farming practices.

ANALYSIS

Principle

As set out in PfE policy JP-J1, a thriving, inclusive and productive economy will be sought in all the nine boroughs of Greater Manchester (forming part of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan). PfE policy JP-J2 seeks to ensure that there is an excellent supply of employment sites and premises across the Plan area, with sufficient variety in terms of quality, cost and location to maximise the ability to attract and retain jobs and investment. As expressed within policy JP-J4, the development of new and existing industry and warehousing sites is important on a wider scale in helping Greater Manchester maximise its ability to attract and retain business and hence support its long-term economic growth prospects and the availability of local jobs.

Under policies E2 and E3 of the adopted Core Strategy (CS) it is clear that the Council will support existing business, in particular under policy E2 which seeks to protect existing employment zones and employment sites and premises (over 0.2ha) and support their retention and redevelopment for employment uses.

In this instance, this existing industrial/employment site is located within a primary employment zone where industrial, business and warehouse uses will be permitted subject to several conditions being satisfied. The four new silo tanks and proposed ancillary works would support Lancashire Dairy Foods Ltd. operating at this site with the storage of milk for the production line. The supporting statement confirms that a total of 223 jobs will be safeguarded through the installation of the silos at the plant, with a total of 50 new jobs created at the site at a range of levels including managerial and operative/sales roles, which would support the continued use of the allocated employment site in accordance with the aims and aspirations of PfE policies JP-J1, JP-J2 and JP-J4, and policies E2 and E3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy.

On this basis, the principle of the development is found to be acceptable, as it would support the retention and development of an existing industrial/commercial site within an allocated Primary Employment Zone, subject to all other material planning considerations being satisfied.

Character and Appearance

Amongst other things, at paragraph 135, the NPPF seeks new development to be: a high standard of design which functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscaping; and establish or maintain a strong sense of place.

Locally, CS policy P3 requires all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design and goes on to list relevant design principles. Further to this, CS policy DM1 sets out general development requirements and details a list of criteria which all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate compliance, including the need for high quality design.

The proposed four aluminium-finished silos would have a diameter of 4.4m and a height of 13.9m to the eaves, excluding the tank pipes and lid. As indicated on drawing VDG-2327-DWG-1002 rev 2, the silos would be sunk into the ground to reduce their height, comparative to the main building which sits at approximately 12m above the natural ground level. As existing, the service yard sits about 1m below the building's finished floor level.

It is acknowledged that the silos would have a practical and functional design which, if placed in an inappropriate setting, could negatively impact the character of the area. However, in this instance, the silos would be located within a designated

primary employment zone and within the boundaries of an existing industrial/employment site. They would be positioned immediately next to the main industrial building (approximately 50m x 111m) and set at an equal height so as not to rise above the main ridge of the existing structure. Due to their close proximity to this building, the silos would be viewed as part of the current industrial environment and would not appear overly prominent when contrasted with the larger, bulkier building behind them.

It is recognised that views of the site from the south east – specifically from the Lidl Supermarket car park and Stockton Street - are especially impacted due to the significant variations in ground levels. However, the existing vegetation along the southern boundary would provide some screening and its preservation is to be secured for at least 30 years (as to be agreed in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan which is to be secured by condition). Additional planting is also proposed along the northern boundary adjacent to Whitelees Road.

Overall, it is found that the silos have been sited in a practical location to minimise the impacts on the character and appearance of the area with vegetation offering valuable screening. The plans indicate that the silos would be clad externally with metal in colour 'Moorland Green' (as shown in section 5 of Planning Statement) which would soften their appearance. However other material details including hard landscaping have not yet been provided and so, whilst the proposed Moorland Green colour is likely acceptable in principle, full materials details are recommended to be secured by condition.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires that new development achieves a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. This is reflected locally through CS policy DM1 which requires development proposals to ensure that they “do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy”.

Although it is expected that most new development will have some impact on neighbours, it is important to ensure that the impact is not so significant that it results in unacceptable harm. New development on employment sites can be particularly sensitive, given that they tend to be of a larger scale, generate more noise and potentially operate at unsociable hours.

As a standard between new development and existing housing a base line distance of 21m should be retained. Given the nature of the proposed development, a greater distance would be expected to help preserve an acceptable standard of living accommodation for the existing occupiers.

The silos would be located to the south of the western car park where the site shares a boundary with the Lidl supermarket and the Littleborough Group Practice Medical Centre. From this aspect, the proposed development would not impact on the residential amenity of any neighbouring occupiers or unduly affect any adjoining commercial businesses.

The nearest residential properties are those to the north-west on Whitelees Road, specifically nos. 77 – 71a, which are located some 70m+ in distance away. Whilst Officers acknowledge the height and bulk of the proposed silos cumulatively, the resultant distance of the silos from the nearest residential properties on Whitelees Road is considered sufficient so not to cause a loss of outlook, have an overbearing impact, or cause a loss of light. Existing trees and vegetation also offer beneficial screening along the site frontage.

Turning to noise and disturbance considerations, the supporting statement confirms that the facility operates 24/7 to ensure continuous production and supply. The proposed four tanks would operate on a first-in, first-out system to maintain freshness and efficiency, details of which are within section 7 of the support planning statement. The silos would be in constant use, operating per the facility's production requirements, with milk deliveries occurring daily between 06:00 and 18:00, seven days a week. The supporting information confirms that minimal noise would be generated during the material offloading and silo cleaning operations since the facility will implement Best Available Technology to ensure low-noise mechanical equipment, such as pumps. In terms of pump operation noise, this has been described to be minimal - similar to offloading and cleaning due to the use of high-efficiency equipment.

The supporting Design and Access/ Planning Statement states that the current access is from Stockton street and confirms that there are no change in deliveries, therefore operational and noise requirements remain as the current use so no further acoustic requirements should be required. There are no objections from the Council's Environmental Health department and Officers have no reason to disagree noting the above factors. The proposal is therefore found to be acceptable, having no unacceptable harm on the amenity of surrounding residents and commercial premises, in accordance with paragraph 135 of the NPPF and CS Policy DM1.

Access and Highway Safety

Policy T2 of the Core Strategy sets out that development and infrastructure proposals are required to satisfy the Council's accessibility hierarchy and in all circumstances, the safety, accessibility and amenity of those who live or have business in the area will have priority, while providing reliable journey times for those travelling through. Developments are required to provide parking in compliance with the Council's Maximum Car Parking Standards as set out in Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy.

The proposed four silos would be located within the existing car park to the south west of the site, adjacent to the existing HGV service area. It is understood that this location has been carefully selected to effectively deliver produce to the site and optimise the plant's operations and accommodate both transport and manufacturing needs. HGV tankers can easily access the service yard from the existing access point via Stockton Street, park, and efficiently offload milk. The slab bases for the silos are strategically positioned to avoid all major utilities, including electricity, gas, and drainage lines.

The proposal would result in the loss of some car parking spaces, which is acknowledged by the Council's Highways Engineer. Whilst the Highways and Engineering Service oppose to any loss of parking which may push vehicles onto the highway, the loss of parking in this instance is so insignificant that the Service do not expect the proposal to create any issues on the highway adjacent and therefore do not hold any objections to the proposal.

The Highways Engineer has also confirmed the following:

- This proposal will not generate any significant volume of traffic.
- The applicant proposes no changes to the highways network with no new roads and no changes to existing roads.
- We do not envisage any issues with servicing and refuse collection from this location.
- We have no new road safety concerns as a result of this proposal.

Overall, there are no objections to the proposal from a highway and safety perspective and no amendments are required. For this reason, the proposal is found to be in accordance with the NPPF and would not conflict with paragraph 116 and Core Strategy policy T2.

Ground Conditions (Contaminated Land)

The Council's Public Protection team have been consulted on the proposal and offered no objections. The proposal is therefore found to be acceptable in regard to paragraph 196 of the NPPF, which seeks to ensure that any unacceptable risks posed by contamination are appropriately addressed and the site is suitable for its proposed use.

Ecology

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment.

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met. This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

PfE Policy JP-G8 also states that through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought where relevant. Development will be expected to achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) have been consulted on the proposal and have reviewed the submitted BNG metric and Preliminary Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain (dated Feb 2025) and have confirmed that the only ecological issue is biodiversity net gain. In summary, the development will result in a small loss of low ecological value grassland however soft landscaping is proposed including new tree planting and enhancement of retained grassland. No mitigation for wildlife is required.

GMEU have confirmed however that "...as the development results in the loss of more than 25sqm of vegetated habitats, schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 applies. A statutory metric and BNG assessment have been provided that demonstrate that 10% net gain can be achieved on the site. The only potential risk is the need to enhance the existing low value grassland to moderate. Failure to enhance would however only lead to a shortfall of 0.03 units to achieve 10% net gain. I would regard it as unreasonable to require more at this stage given if only fairly-poor was achieved 10% net gain would still be achieved. I am therefore satisfied that no further information on BNG is required at this stage. As the on-site tree planting measure are significant as defined by defra, control via HMMP should occur. Given the low number of trees, I would regard a legal agreement as unreasonable, with the 30 year HMMP controlled by standard condition. For wildlife, I recommend enhancement through provision of one bird box on a retained tree. The details can be provided via condition."

Based on the above, it is recommended that the proposed tree planting is secured through a Habitat Maintenance and Management Plan and secured by condition, to

which the applicant has agreed in writing, as well as the provision of one bird box on a retained tree. It is also recommended by Officers that any trees to be retained be fenced off and protected in accordance with BS 5837:2012 standards. Subject to these conditions, the proposal is found to be acceptable in regard to biodiversity and compliant with paragraph 197 of the NPPF and PfE Policy JP-G8.

Flood Risk

The site was subject to a flood risk assessment prepared by Black & Veatch, dated 2006 prior to further development and identified mitigation measures were put in place at that time. The proposal does not increase any existing floor area and the silos are built on a small plinth, so the proposal does not create any inherent potential flood.

The LLFA (Drainage) have been consulted on the proposal, but no such response has been received. The site is not located within a high-risk flooding area, nor a critical drainage area, and as such is considered to be acceptable in regard to Policy G8 of the Core Strategy and section 14 of the NPPF.

Conclusion

The site is within the defined urban area with an allocated Primary Employment Zone, in an accessible and sustainable location. The proposed silos would support the continued industrial and employment use on the site, supporting economic growth, and would not unacceptably impact on the visual amenity of the area and the residential amenity of the surrounding properties subject to conditions. The traffic generation, access and parking arrangements are also found to be acceptable.

In view of the above, the proposal is considered to comply with relevant local and national policy and is considered to represent sustainable development. On this basis the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to conditions.

1. The development must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans and documents unless otherwise required by the conditions below:
 - Site location Plan scale 1:1250 dated 03.03.2025
 - Drawing reference VDG-2327-DWG-1000 revision 2 (Proposed Site Plan)
 - Drawing reference VDG-2327-DWG-1004 revision 2 (Proposed Plan Area of Silo Base)
 - Drawing reference VDG-2327-DWG-1002 revision 2 (Proposed Plan of Works)
 - Drawing reference VDG-2327-DWG-1001 revision 2 (Section, Elevations and 3D Views)

- Drawing reference VDG-2327-DWG-1003 revision 2 (Tree Protection Fencing)
- Preliminary Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain, ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd Reference: 2024-413, February 2025

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. The development shall not commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP) has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The HMMP shall be prepared in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and include:
 - a. A non-technical summary;
 - b. the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
 - c. the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan, including a timetable for its implementation and completion;
 - d. the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
 - e. the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority,

The created and/or enhanced habitat specified in the approved HMMP shall be completed, managed and maintained in accordance with the approved HMMP.

Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when the:

- f. HMMP has been implemented; and
- g. habitat creation and enhancement works as set out in the HMMP have been completed.

Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Reason: To ensure the development delivers a biodiversity net gain on site in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and policies G6 and G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and JP-G8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.

Reason for Pre-commencement: The HMMP will be required as part of the arrangements to be approved under the statutory BNG condition which requires submission of the Biodiversity Gain Plan prior to commencement of development.

4. Prior to the commencement of the development, a detailed specification and/or samples of materials to be used externally in the construction of the

development and details of any hardstanding and retaining walls/boundary treatment have first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such details shall include the type, colour and texture of the materials. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the duly approved details thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring a satisfactory visual appearance to the development and in accordance with Policies P3 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved plans, no development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscaping works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include the formation of any banks, terraces or other earthworks, hard surfaced areas and materials, planting plans, specifications and schedules (including planting size, species and numbers/densities) and a scheme for the timing / phasing of implementation works.

The landscaping works shall be carried out in accordance with the approved scheme for timing / phasing of implementation or within the next planting season following final occupation of the development hereby permitted, whichever is the sooner.

Any trees or shrubs planted or retained in accordance with this condition which are removed, uprooted, destroyed, die or become severely damaged or become seriously diseased within 5 years of planting shall be replaced within the next planting season by trees or shrubs of similar size and species to those originally required to be planted.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development and in accordance with Core Strategy Policies G6 and G7, Policies JP-G6 and JP-G7 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. No development (including any demolition, site clearance or preparation works) shall take place until the trees that are to be retained within the site, as indicated within table 4.2 of the approved Preliminary Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain document, have been enclosed with temporary protective fencing and temporary ground protection has been fully installed in full accordance with BS:5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction' and with the approved Tree Protection Plan ref. VDG-2327-DWG-1003 revision 2.

The necessary protection measures shall be retained and adhered to throughout the construction phase of the development and no works, excavation, tipping, or stacking/storage of materials shall take place beyond such protective fencing during the construction period.

Reason: In order to protect the existing trees on the site in the interests of the amenities of the area and in accordance with Policies P3, G1, G6 and G7 of

the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policies JPP1, JP-G6 and JP-G7 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. Prior to the first operation of the development hereby approved, a scheme of biodiversity enhancements, including the provision of one bird box on a retained tree, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The duly approved scheme shall then be implemented in full prior to the first operation of the development and retained thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of enhancing biodiversity and habitat provision within the site in accordance with Policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-G8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.